



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RDI Announces Fellowships to Impact Global Poverty, Women's Land Rights at International Women' Day

SEATTLE – In celebration of its 40th anniversary and International Women's Day, the Rural Development Institute (RDI) today announced two inaugural fellowships, supported by the Nike Foundation and area philanthropists, that will support the creation of a Global Center for Women and Land. The Center will focus on obtaining secure land rights for women, who represent 51 percent of the world's population and provide 60 to 80 percent of the world's food production, yet own less than 5 percent of the world's titled land.

“The Nike Foundation is proud to announce the Nike Fellowship, and support the importance of investing in the rights of adolescent girls,” said Nike Foundation President Maria Eitel, keynote speaker at RDI's 2nd Annual International Women's Day luncheon that marks the United Nations' holiday to honor women's achievements while also recognizing the progress yet to be made for women's equality.

“Lack of secure land rights is widely recognized as a root cause of global poverty.,The Nike Foundation's focus is to alleviate poverty by unleashing the economic power of the world's most significant untapped resource: adolescent girls,” Eitel said. “Research has shown the ripple effect of investing in girls changes not only their lives, but their families, communities, and their nation. It is time to invest in their legal rights that make this possible.”

RDI also announced the formation of the Jennifer Dunn Fellowship for Women and Land. The Fellowship honors the late congresswoman who represented the 8th Congressional District from 1993 to 2004 and, as a member of RDI's Advisory Council and Co-Chair of RDI's inaugural International Women's Day event, was a passionate and long-time supporter of RDI's work.

The Jennifer Dunn Fellowship, with a goal of \$1 million, will be used to sponsor professionals participating in gender initiatives at RDI.

The one-year Nike Fellowship of \$50,000 will focus on research and recommendations to address unequal inheritance of land for girls in China, India and Uganda. The fellowships will be used as a sustaining endowment to sponsor professionals participating in one- to two-year fellowships at the Global Center for Women and Land.

“Girls invest 90 percent of income back in their family, boys, 34 percent,” Eitel said. “We believe securing long-term land rights for the 600 million girls in poverty today is fundamental to solving poverty.”

RDI is an international non-profit working to alleviate global poverty by securing land rights for the world’s poorest people, most of whom are rural women. RDI announced its commitment to create a Global Center for Women and Land at the Clinton Global Initiative, where it was highlighted by former President Bill Clinton.

“When women have secure land rights, they are better able to improve their lives and those of their families, and the ripple effects extend beyond their families to affect regional economies,” said RDI CEO Tim Hanstad.

“However, there is a dearth of expert professionals in the field to address the complex legal and policy issues that must be faced in correcting, over time, the dramatic imbalance in land ownership between men and women,” Hanstad said. “The Global Center for Women and Land will address this shortage of expertise by training law and policy professionals in gender-specific problems related to land access and land rights. These professionals will participate in fellowships or research assistantships where they will receive on-the-job training in action research, policy advocacy and technical assistance for developing country governments.”

Over the past 40 years, RDI has worked in more than 40 countries, helping more than 400 million people attain secure land rights. With offices in China, India, Indonesia and Rwanda, RDI is engaged in a number of projects in partnership with global leaders, governments and NGOs, including efforts to secure women’s property rights and an ambitious “micro-land ownership” program with the governments of four states in India, one of the world’s most populous and impoverished countries.

“Our research has shown that it only takes a little bit of land to make a big difference in lifting people out of poverty,” said Hanstad. “We have found that micro-plots of land as little as 1/10th of an acre can provide a foundation for extremely poor people, especially women, to build a sustainable livelihood and a better economic future.”

The luncheon was moderated by Nancy Carter Foster, the U.S. State Department’s Senior Advisor for Health and supported by members of the Honorary Advisory Council, including:

- Washington State Gov. Christine Gregoire
- Washington State Representative David Reichert
- Rosemary Aragon, Rotary Foundation representative

- Phyllis Campbell, president of the Seattle Foundation
- Hernando de Soto, president of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy
- Richard Donner and Lauren Shuler Donner, film producers and directors
- Dr. Mark Emmert, president of the University of Washington
- Dr. Pamela Hartigan, managing director of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship
- Karen E. Glover, global integration partner, K&L Gates
- Mary Houghton, co-founder of Shorebank;
- Helen LaKelly Hunt, president of The Sister Fund
- Ambassador Swanee Hunt, president, the Hunt Alternatives Fund
- Neal Keny-Guyer, CEO of Mercy Corps
- Irene Natividad, president of the Global Summit of Women
- Kavita Ramdas, president of the Global Fund for Women
- Suzanne Raubenstine of Boeing Capital Corporation
- Dimple Sahni of the Omidyar Network
- Kellye Testy, dean of Seattle University School of Law
- Irene Tinker, founding board president of the International Center for Research on Women

The Honorary Chairs of the event are William Neukom, president of the American Bar Association, and his wife, Sally Neukom. The Honorary Celebrity Chairs are Richard Donner and Lauren Shuler Donner, Hollywood film producers and directors.

Sponsors of the event include PACCAR, Boeing, Costco, Citigroup, Safeco, the Seattle International Foundation, K&L Gates, APCO Worldwide, and Starbucks.

For more information about RDI, visit www.rdiland.org.

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